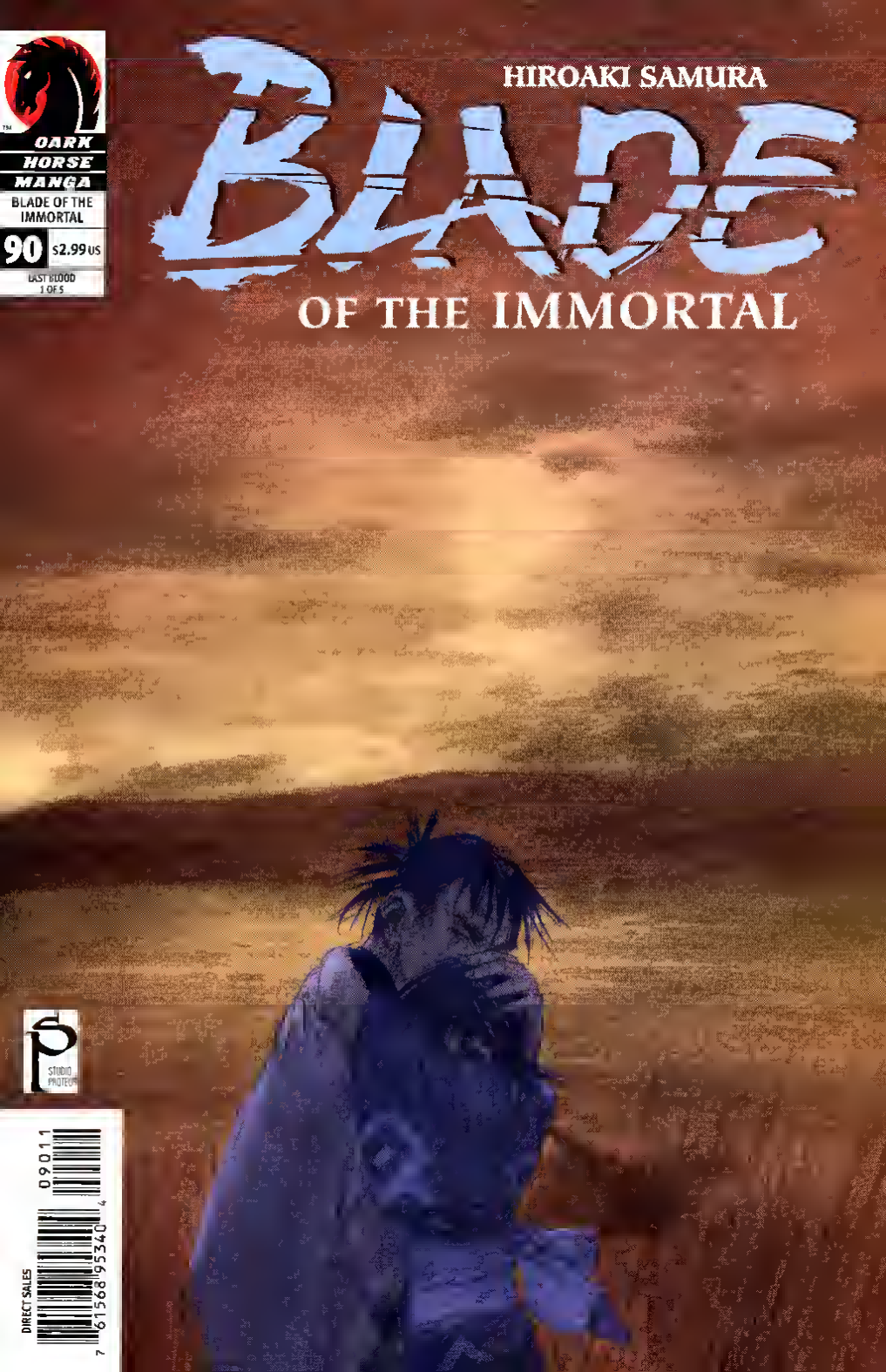
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1 OF 5
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BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

art and story by

HIROAKI SAMURA

translation by

DANA LEWIS and TOREN SMITH

lettering and retouch by

TOMOKO SAITO

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MANJI
Immortal *rōnin*

RIN
Last heir of the Muteniichi-*ryū dōjō* destroyed by Ittō-*ryū*

ANOTSU
The leader of the Ittō-*ryū* sword school

THE STORY SO FAR

Infected by *kessenchu*, mystical bloodworms which can heal all wounds and grant their host immortality, Manji's bloodthirst led to the capture and murder of his sister. To atone for the 100 good people who died at his hand under his corrupt lord, Manji vowed to slay 1,000 evil men in exchange for the release of death.

When her parents were murdered on her fourteenth birthday by Anotsu Kagehisa's Ittō-*ryū* swordsmen, Rin Asano became part of a mad revenge cycle which began when Anotsu's grandfather was thrown out of the Asano clan's Muteniichi-*ryū dōjō* fifty years before. A quest for vengeance was instilled in Anotsu, a similar quest now haunts Rin. Upon learning of Manji, she enlisted his aid to destroy the Ittō-*ryū* and avenge her parents.

After leaving Manji to complete her quest alone, Rin prevails over great hardships and comes into a strange, unsteady alliance with Anotsu in order to survive while they are both on the run in Kaga. With a revenge-hungry band of swordfighters on their trail, they stop only when Anotsu tracks down his heart's true desire, Makie, who once bested Manji in battle. After saving her life and continuing on their journey, Anotsu's health wanes, as he now suffers from a bad case of tetanus and lockjaw, contracted after being cut with a poisoned sword in combat.

designer **DEBRA BAILEY** editor **PHILIP SIMON** publisher **MIKE RICHARDSON**

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無限の住人

LAST BLOOD

-part one-

UM...
PARDON ME? I'D LIKE TO BUY SOMETHING TO EAT.
IS THIS ENOUGH...?

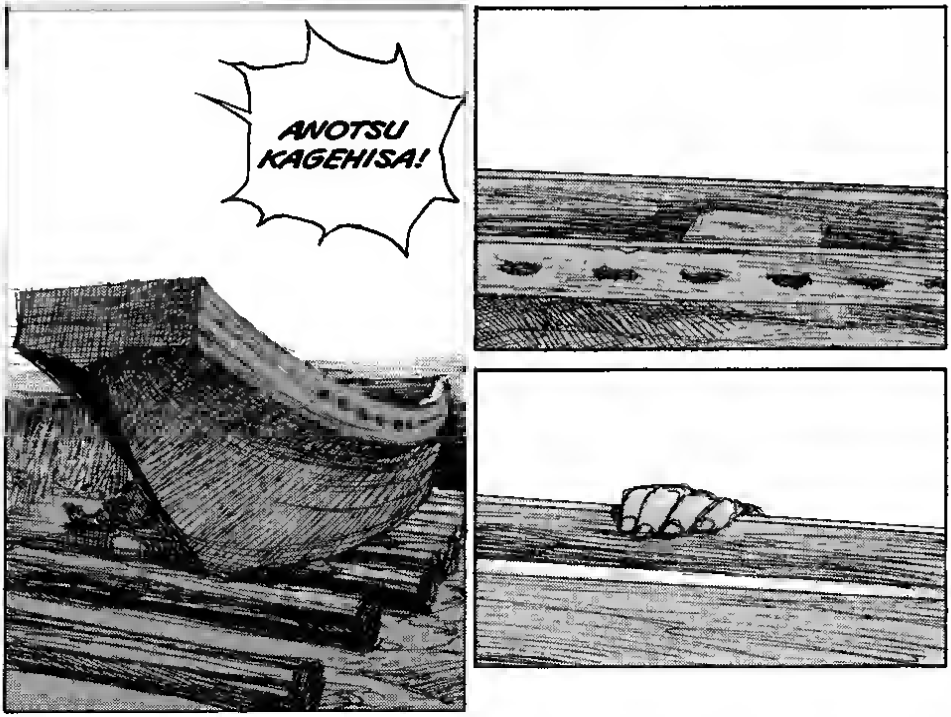
.....
.....
.....

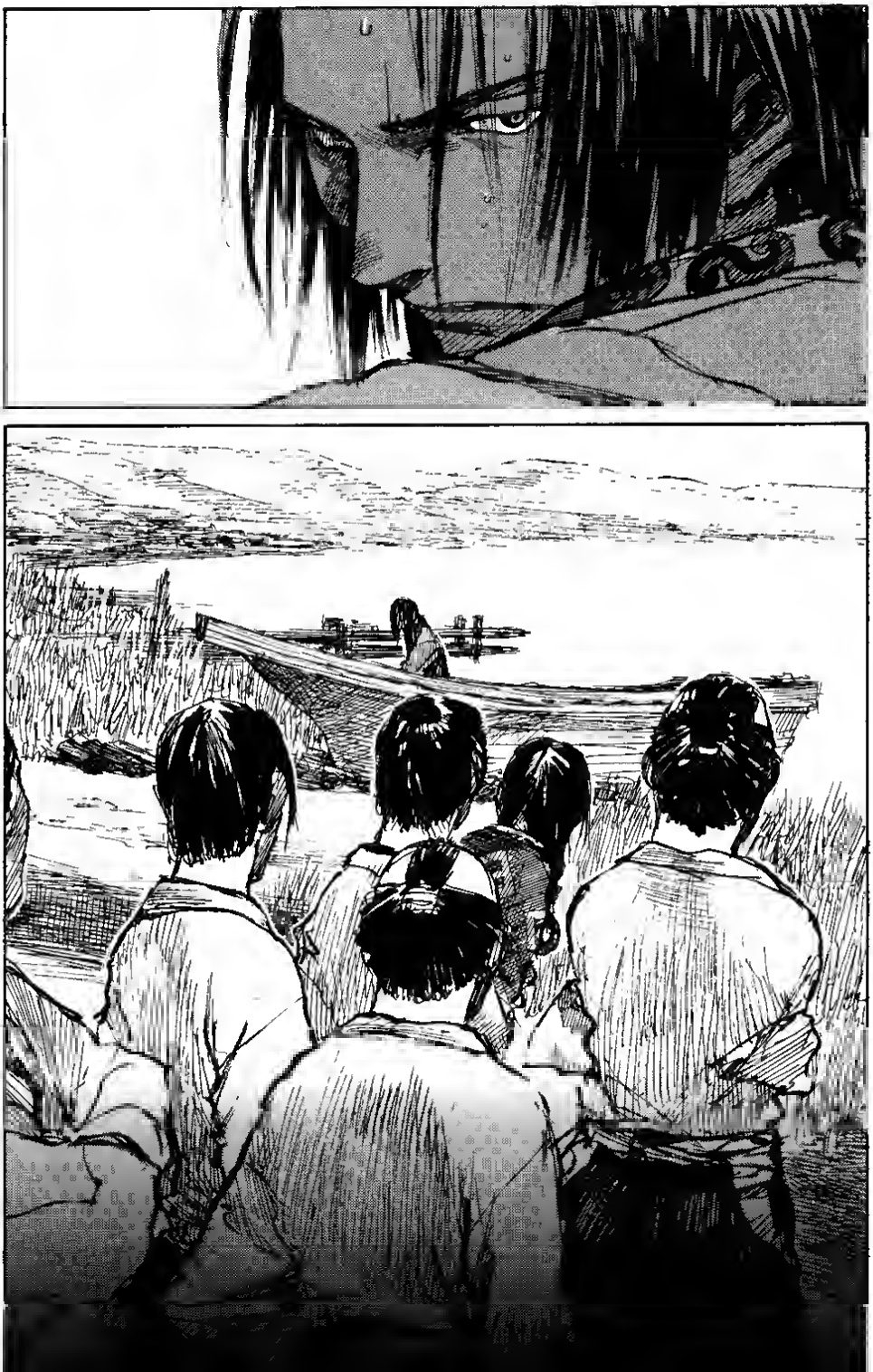
SET YER-SELF DOWN.

...?
MY TOENAILS ARE SPLIT-TING.
WHAT'S HAPPEN-ING TO ME...?
I DIDN'T EVEN NOTICE...
IT AIN'T MUCH, BUT.
OH.. ALL THAT?! THANK YOU!

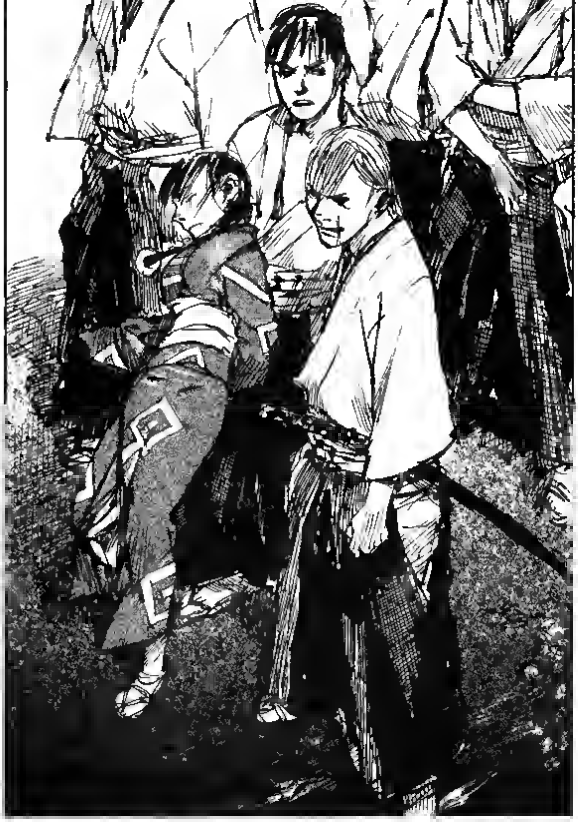
!!
THAP
HEY, MAN. ARE YOU *SURE* THIS IS HER?
SURE I'M SURE. THE KIMONO, THE *HAIR*... JUST LIKE OSAKU SAID. WHICH *MEANS*...

...THE BOSS MAN WHO HACKED UP OUR BUDDIES IS AROUND HERE, TOO.
YO, BITCH! WE GOT SOME STUFF...
...A WHOLE PILE OF STUFF WE WANT TO ASK YOU. BUT FIRST...
...MAYBE YOU WANT TO TAKE US TO ANOTSU KAGEHISA, GIRL?
WHILE YOU CAN STILL WALK!


ANOTSU KAGEHISA!



S... SORRY...
YES! I KNOW! BUT...
IT JUST SEEMED TOO WEIRD! ME, GETTING HURT FOR YOU?! AND SO...



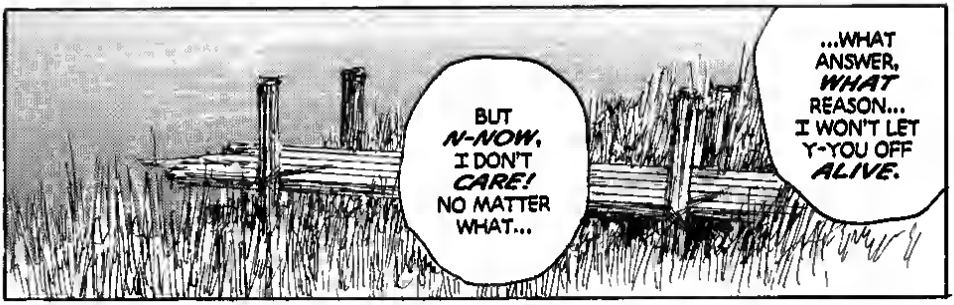
.....!
A-ANOTSU KAGEHISA...!

S-S-SICK OR NOT...
WHAT *IS* THIS SH-SHIT?!

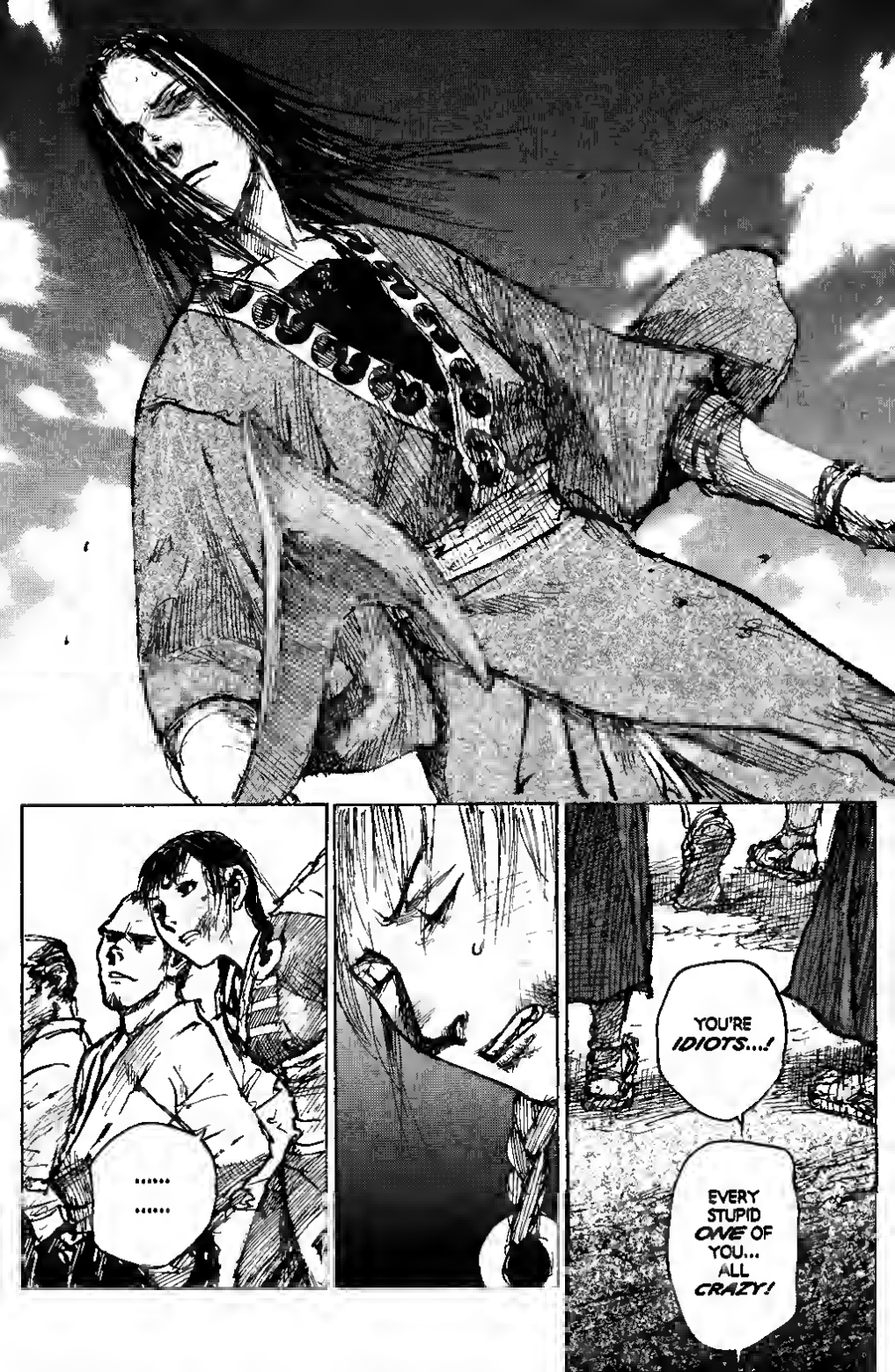
Y-YOU THOUGHT YOU COULD...

...B-BE OUR *MASTER*? *LOOK* AT YOU! WHAT A F-FRIGGIN' *LOSER*!!

A-ANOTSU...
IF P-POSSIBLE, I WANT TO KNOW *WHY*... WHY THE M-MISTRESS AND THE MASTER...
...HAD TO *D-DIE* LIKE THAT... ..... *NO!*
I *WANTED* TO KNOW!


BUT *N-NOW*, I DON'T *CARE!* NO MATTER WHAT...
...WHAT ANSWER, *WHAT* REASON... I WON'T LET Y-YOU OFF *ALIVE.*

YOU, I *KILL!* TAKE UP YOUR *SWORD!*


.....
.....
YOU'RE IDIOTS...!
EVERY STUPID ONE OF YOU... ALL CRAZY!

CAN'T YOU SEE, DAMN IT?! HE'S NOT A KENSHI ANY MORE!
HE'S JUST A DYING MAN!
THERE'S A RIGHT WAY TO KILL, ISN'T THERE?!
YOU'RE DISGUSTING! GANGING UP ON SOME SICK GUY!!
ANOTSU KAGEHISA!
YOU, TOO, YOU PSYCHO!
YOU'RE A STUMBLING WRECK!
STOP SMIRKING LIKE YOU CAN DO EVERYTHING YOURSELF!
WHO THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?!

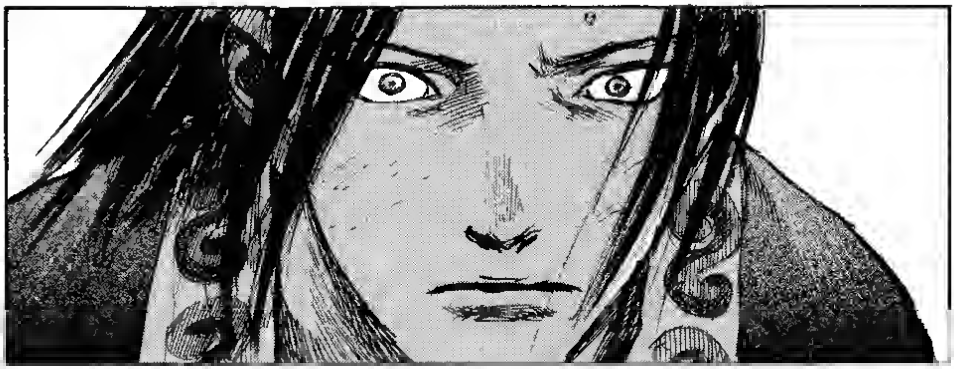
SH-SHUT HER UP!
JUST COMMIT HARA-KIRI AND--
mmgph!

Y-YES... ACCEPT YOUR F-FATE... ANOTSU KAGE-HISA!

WHAT THE HELL...?
HEY...?!

HEY, RIN!!

.....
.....
.....?
M...
MANJI...?



.....
.....!
HEY, YOU! STOP RIGHT THERE!
HUH? WHO THE HELL'S THAT?

.....
MA...
.....
.....
sniff

MANJI...
.....
MANJI...

MANJI!! LISTEN!! KILL EVERY-ONE!!
DO IT NOW!!
?!
HUH...?!
WHAT TH--?!

SHUT UP, YA STUPID BITCH!
SLICE THEM! BUTCHER THEM!!
YOU IDIOTS! CONTROL HER!

AW, SHIT!
DON'T TELL ME... ITTŌ-RYŪ?

WHY AM I SCREAMING THESE THINGS? I DON'T UNDER-STAND...
IF MANJI...
IF ANYONE HERE...
...FINALLY KILLED THAT MAN...
...MY JOURNEY WOULD BE OVER AT LAST.
I KNOW THAT... AND YET...
SAY SOME-THING, YOU ASSHOLE!
HEY, YOU! ANSWER ME!

WELL, *SHIT*, RIN.
I *FINALLY* TRACK YOU DOWN, AND *NOW* WHAT? FRIGGIN' *WEIRD TWIST*, GIRL!

SO... I GOT JUST *ONE* QUESTION.
ARE THESE CLOWNS ITTŌ-*RYŪ*?

EH...?
UM...
.....

I...
I DON'T... THINK SO.
GOT IT.
RIN... SORRY, KID.
I MADE A GRAVESIDE PROMISE, TOO.
I CAN HELP YOU GET REVENGE, BUT I CAN'T JUST CHOP UP EVERY DUMBASS...
...THAT CROSSES YOUR PATH.
SO I NEED TO KNOW-- ARE THESE GUYS EVIL MEN THAT I SHOULD KILL?
THIS TIME, RIGHT NOW, I'LL TRUST YOUR JUDGE-MENT.
.....
.....
M... MANJI... I...

WHAT'S GOING ON?
HE ISN'T ITTŌ-RYŪ...?
.....
.....
I...
I...
.....
.....
AH...
.....
.....

WHAT SHOULD I DO..?
I WASN'T EVEN THINK-ING...
WHO'S THE VICTIM ...?
WHO IS IT...
...THAT MOST DESERVES TO DIE?
WELL, RIN?! WHICH IS IT?!
.....
.....

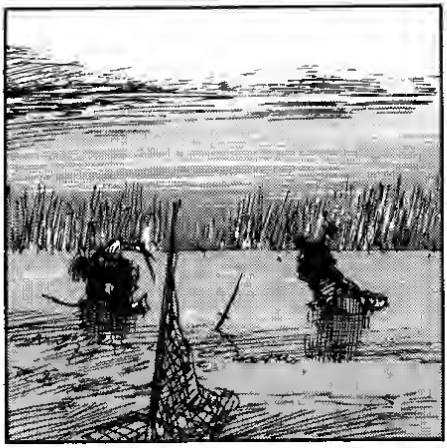
I... I DON'T KNOW...
I JUST DON'T KNOW!
I... I'M SUCH A LITTLE FOOL!
I'LL MAKE SOME... AWFUL DECI-SION...!
SO...
...THIS IS ALL I KNOW.
...THEY WILL KILL ME!
IF YOU DON'T KILL THESE MEN... THEN LATER, ABSOLUTE-LY...

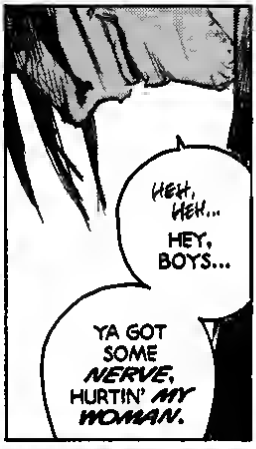
!!

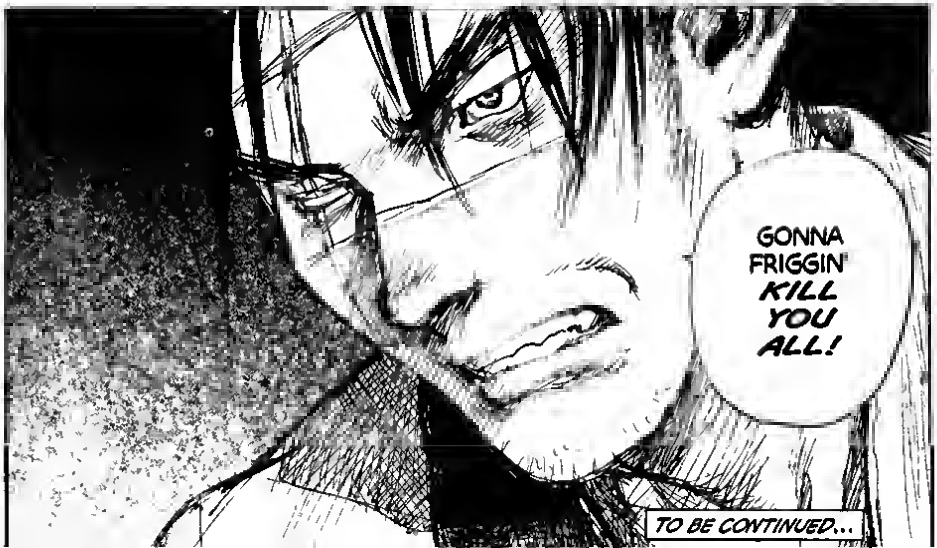
HEH HEH...
DAMN... WON'T YOU EVER GROW UP?
"SOB, CRY, BOO-HOO-HOO!"

MAKING EVERYTHING SO COMPLI-CATED.
ALL I NEEDED TO KNOW, GIRL...
...WAS THAT ONE SIMPLE FACT.

FOR-
GIVE
ME!




HEH, HEH...
HEY, BOYS...
YA GOT SOME NERVE, HURTIN' MY WOMAN.


GONNA FRIGGIN' KILL YOU ALL!
TO BE CONTINUED...

LETTERS

send letters to:

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GLOSSARY

hara-kiri: ritual suicide by disembowelment

kenshi: in this context, a warrior

Ittō-ryū: the radical sword school of Anotsu Kagehisa

ryū: a sword school

ABOUT THE SWASTIKA

The main character in *Blade of the Immortal*, Manji, has taken the "crux gammata" as both his name and his personal symbol. This symbol is also known as the *swastika*, a name derived from the San-skrit *svastiko* (meaning "welfare," from *su* — "well" + *asti* — "he is"). As a symbol of prosperity and good fortune, the swastika was widely used throughout the ancient world (for example, appearing often on Mesopotamian coinage), including North and South America and has been used in Japan as a symbol of Buddhism since ancient times. To be precise, the symbol generally used by Japanese Buddhists is the *sauvastika*, which moves in a counter-clockwise direction, and is called the manji in Japanese. The *sauvastika* generally stands for night, and often for magical practices. The *swastika*, whose arms point in a clockwise direction, is generally considered a solar symbol. It was this version (the *hakenkreuz*) that was perverted by the Nazis. It is important that readers understand that the swastika has ancient and honorable origins and it is those that apply to this story which takes place in the 18th century (ca. 1782-3). *There is no anti-Semitic or pro-Nazi meaning behind the use of the symbol in this story. Those meanings did not exist until after 1910.*

ABOUT THE TRANSLATION

The Artwork: The author of *Blade of the Immortal* requested that we make an effort to avoid mirror-imaging his artwork. Normally, all of our manga are first copied in a mirror-image in order to facilitate the left-to-right reading of the pages. However, Mr. Samura decided that he would rather see his pages reversed via the technique of cutting up the panels and repasting them in reverse order. While we feel that this often leads to problems in panel-to-panel continuity, we place primary importance on the wishes of the creator. Therefore, most of *Blade of the Immortal* has been produced using the "cut and paste" technique. There are, of course, some sequences where it was impossible to do this, and mirror-imaged panels or pages were used instead.

The Sound Effects & Dialogue: Since some of Mr. Samura's sound effects are integral parts of the artwork, the decision was made to leave those in their original Japanese. When it was crucial to the understanding of the panel that the sound effect be in English, however, Mr. Samura chose to redraw the panel. We hope readers will view the unretouched sound effects as essential portions of Mr. Samura's extraordinary artwork. In addition, Mr. Samura's treatment of dialogue is quite different from that featured in average samurai manga and is considered to be one of the things that has made *Blade* such a huge hit in Japan. Mr. Samura has mixed a variety of linguistic styles in this fantasy story, where some characters speak in the mannered style of old Japan, while others speak as if they were street-corner punks from a bad area of modern-day Tokyo. The anachronistic slang used by some of the characters in the English translation reflects the unusual mix of speech patterns from the original Japanese text.

NEXT MONTH:

Last Blood, Part Two

Manji and Rin... together again. The surviving members of the Shingyōtō-*ryū* clan led by the vindictive Inya (you can cut the revenge-lust in the air with an *ōgonchū*!), face off against Manji. Our favorite immortal swordslinger may be confused by Rin's strange alliance with Anotsu, but he's willing to fight the Shingyōtō-*ryū* students in order to be with his dear "little sister" again. Another classic frenetic Samura-style fight has begun! ALSO, two fan-favorite warriors return to *Blade's* pages, providing further complications and unavoidably twisted bloodshed! On Sale July 14!

—Philip